

Introduction

The Army's most important resource is its people. As such, the development of a competent Acquisition and Technology Workforce (A&TWF) is critical to the future Army. It is one of the top priorities of the Deputy Director for Acquisition Career Management (DDACM) and the Acquisition Career Management Office (ACMO), both of which report to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology. The need for top-quality A&TWF members has become more important as the Army reshapes and streamlines its forces and becomes more technologically advanced and culturally diverse. To aid workforce members in maintaining continued professional competence, the ACMO continues to develop and execute career development programs and acquisition workforce policy.

In 1996, the ACMO established customer support offices (CSOs) at locations that had a large population of workforce members. At that time, the CSOs were staffed with acquisition workforce support specialists (AWSSs) (now known as acquisition career managers (ACMs)) to provide individual career management assistance. The DDACM expanded the CSOs to encompass five major regions across the United States: Northeast, Central, National Capital, Southern, and Western. Today, the CSOs are led by three regional directors (located in the Northeast, National Capital, and Southern regions) and are supported by a team of acquisition career management advocates (ACMAs), ACMs, and ACM assistants. The CSOs in these areas are a part of a successful regional strategy to meet the career development needs of the workforce.

Regional Team Players

Regional directors are senior-level acquisition civilians within designated areas who are responsible for assisting the DDACM and the ACMO in establishing and implementing acquisition policy in support of Army goals and objectives to help develop a highly qualified A&TWF. They sup-

REGIONAL CUSTOMER SUPPORT OFFICES

Kelly L. Terry, Maxine H. Maples,
and Sandra Long

port development, implementation, and execution of A&TWF policy and procedures. They also ensure that the workforce routinely receives consistent, timely information on acquisition programs, education, training, and competitive opportunities. In addition to being responsible for acquisition career development and career management issues in their region, they ensure that acquisition workforce members are trained in accordance with the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), while maintaining consistency with Army objective policies and programs. Regional directors also serve as the main source of guidance for the regional A&TWF members and senior leadership on issues relevant to career development and management.

ACMAs are senior-level civilian acquisition leaders located in organizations having a high concentration of A&TWF members. ACMAs are recommended by an authorized individual at an acquisition organization and appointed by the DDACM. They are responsible for command-specific issues. ACMAs serve to enhance the communication of information routinely routed through functional and command channels and the ACMs; they are the conduits for the flow of information to and from their organization. As a link to the Director for Acquisition Career

Management (DACM) from the field, ACMAs offer commands an opportunity to express concerns and register issues. ACMAs have become one of the most valuable sources for information exchange and for the development and implementation of acquisition policy. They work closely with the regional ACMs and regional directors to ensure all members of their workforce have equal and timely access to opportunities and information on DDACM policies, programs, and initiatives.

ACMs are key components of the DDACM's customer support strategy. They are the first source of information in the career development and management process. ACMs use the Acquisition Career Development Plan and their knowledge of the Army's acquisition environment to assist workforce members in assessing the skills needed as well as the education experience, training, and competencies required for success. They provide timely and accurate information to their regional workforce on DDACM policies, programs, and initiatives; ensure compliance with acquisition education, training and experience (AETE) requirements for certification; and establish and maintain the Acquisition Career Record Brief (ACRB). It is also their responsibility to facilitate the career management process and serve as an objective source for assisting

workforce members. Each member of the A&TWF has an ACM, as outlined below:

- **Competitive Development** Group members and civilian members of the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) are served by ACMs (formerly known as functional acquisition specialists) in the Acquisition Management Branch (AMB) at the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM).

- Other civilian members of the A&TWF are served by regionally located ACMs (formerly AWSSs).

- Officers are served by an assignment officer in the AMB at PERSCOM.

- Army Reserve officers are served by an ACM at Army Reserve-PERSCOM, St. Louis, MO.

- Army National Guard officers are served by the Army National Guard Career Management Branch, Arlington, VA.

Upon assignment to an acquisition position, you should first contact your ACM. Your ACM will assist you with career development and help you understand and prepare the documents discussed in the *Army Acquisition Career Management Handbook 2001* and *AETE Catalog*. For a complete list of regional directors, ACMAs, ACMs, and ACM assistants, refer to the AAC home page at <http://dacm.rdaisa.army.mil> and click on **Your Acquisition Management Team**. You can also log on to the AMB home page at <http://www-perscom.army.mil> for PERSCOM contact information.

Regional Initiatives

The regional offices have been instrumental in providing several training and career development initiatives for the A&TWF. These initiatives include the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Distance Learning Master Programs in Program Management (MSPM 836) and Contract Management (MSCM 835); the Acquisition Career Experience (ACE)

Program, which recruits students from local universities for paid summer internships; and the Rotational Developmental Assignment Program (RDAP), which affords acquisition workforce members the opportunity to rotate through assignments in other directorates/commands and develop and enhance technical and leadership competencies. The support of supervisors and senior leaders throughout the regions has contributed to A&TWF members being able to benefit from these initiatives. The various programs typically are piloted in one region. Based on the success of the program, pilots are then expanded to other regions.

Distance Learning Programs

MSCM 835 and MSPM 836 are 27-month-long regional distance learning programs sponsored by the AAC and offered by NPS. The curriculum consists of 50 credit hours completed in 9 quarters through a predetermined series of courses. For the first eight quarters, classes are held onsite during duty and nonduty hours via a video teleconferencing link to an NPS classroom in Monterey, CA. The last quarter of the program is completed through an accelerated 8-week residence session at NPS.

Linda College, a current MSCM student from the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM), Fort Monmouth, NJ, says, "NPS offers a wonderful opportunity to earn a master's degree designed for your specific career field. Distance learning allows you to juggle your career, education, and family."

MSCM 835 is currently being piloted at Fort Monmouth, NJ, with 10 students and at Huntsville, AL, with 5 students. The MSCM Program satisfies Defense Acquisition University (DAU) mandatory training requirements for Level III certification in contracting, meets the DAWIA requirement for 24 hours of business subjects, and fulfills 40 hours of continuous learning.

MSPM 836 is being piloted in Huntsville, AL, with 28 students and at Fort Monmouth, NJ, with 5 students. The MSPM Program degree provides equivalency for both the 14-week Defense Systems Management College Advanced Program Management Course (PMT-302) and the Software Acquisition Management Course. It also satisfies DAU mandatory Level III training requirements in both acquisition logistics and program management and Level II training in manufacturing, production and quality assurance (MP&QA); systems planning, research, development and engineering (SPRDE); and test and evaluation (T&E).

ACE Program

The ACE Program, sponsored by the ACMO, is a program for students in their sophomore and junior years of college. The ACE Program is a paid, 2-year academic/government joint collaboration where students from a multifunctional academic background learn the issues and challenges surrounding the development, procurement, and deployment of state-of-the-art equipment. Students team with an academic advisor from their university and an Army acquisition mentor to collaborate on challenging projects, oftentimes culminating in a senior thesis project. The program began last spring as a partnership among James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA; the ACMO; Headquarters, Army Materiel Command; and the CECOM Acquisition Center.

The ACE Program had a very auspicious beginning, with students working in several organizations in the Washington, DC, area and at Fort Monmouth, NJ. Because of the successes of the small pilot group, the ACMO is expanding the program and partnering with many other schools across the five regions. ACE students applying for the next session will have the opportunity to work anywhere in CONUS.

Through the ACE Program, the ACMO offers students a tremendous

opportunity to work in a fast-paced, technological environment with career potential. For more information, including instructions for applying, please visit the ACE Web site at <http://dacm.sarda.army.mil/Acepage/index.htm> or contact the ACM in your region. In addition, refer to the ACE Program article on Page 44 of this issue.

RDAP

"The Rotational Development Assignment Program is a fantastic way to obtain the cross training the Army desires for its future leaders," says Kari A. Elliott, Program Executive Office for Air and Missile Defense (PEO, AMD), on an RDAP assignment in the Project Management Office, Lower Tier. "Because of the variety of work performed by Team Redstone, RDAP is able to offer numerous assignments in many functional areas; e.g., program management, testing, logistics, and contracts. I highly recommend the regional developmental program in the Redstone community because of the diverse opportunities it affords," concludes Elliott.

Regional Training

The AAC Regional Training Program is the result of the DDACM's desire to provide ACMAs the chance to offer onsite training and experience opportunities geared specifically to the needs of their region. The DDACM and ACMO continue to support education, training, and experience opportunities for the A&TWF as an essential part of career development. The A&TWF has responded favorably in the past to these AAC opportunities, and anticipates that interest in career-enhancing programs will increase. To that end, the CSOs are offering several leadership training courses in FY01, one of which is described below.

Leadership for Critical Times is one of the exciting new leadership training opportunities. It was initiated in the Southern Region and jointly developed in partnership with

the Office of Personnel Management and the U.S. Space and Rocket Center. This course promotes leadership and the importance of teamwork in a unique learning environment. It embraces seven of the AAC competencies that impact leadership: problem solving, decisiveness, accountability, interpersonal skills, oral communication, resilience, and human resource management.

The Leadership for Critical Times pilot course is a 2-day session with students from numerous Army organizations in the Huntsville/Redstone community. The first day covers didactics on the seven competencies and includes several physically interactive team-building exercises. The second day is a simulated shuttle mission launch with time-critical performance requirements. Following each exercise, students are required to evaluate themselves as well as their team on the characteristics of each of the seven competencies, assess their strengths and limitations, provide insights from the experience, and relate their experiences to their work environment.

Leadership for Critical Times is an excellent venue for addressing teamwork and conflict resolution for those organizations that recently merged or are facing mergers. Organizations interested in future offerings for this course should contact their ACMs.

Conclusion

Regional CSOs are in place to provide assistance to workforce members as they pursue career goals while working for the Department of the Army (DA), and to support the development of a competent A&TWF. Many excellent educational and experiential programs are available to the A&TWF. Any of the regional team members listed in the accompanying charts may be contacted regarding questions, concerns, ACMO products, policies, and career management services or ongoing initiatives. A list of contacts may be found on the AAC home page. Also

visit the regional Web sites at <http://www.monmouth.army.mil/cecom/ac/train/aac.html> and <http://SouthernRegion.redstone.army.mil/southernregion/> regarding the many outstanding ACMO programs available to workforce members. These Web sites also contain policy information, information unique to the region, and useful links to other Web sites of interest.

KELLY L. TERRY, a member of the AAC, is the Regional Director for the Northeast and Central regions. She holds a master's degree in business administration from Monmouth University. She is certified in contracting, program management, and logistics and is a recent graduate of the Personnel Management for Executives Course sponsored by the Army Management Staff College.

MAXINE H. MAPLES, a member of the AAC, is the Regional Director for the Southern and Western regions. She previously served as the Program Operations Director for PEO, AMD and is a recipient of the DA Exceptional Civilian Service Award. She has a B.S. degree in business administration from Athens State University. She is certified in program management and business, cost estimating, and financial management.

SANDRA LONG, a member of the AAC, is the Regional Director for the National Capital, Central, and OCONUS regions. She holds a master's degree in management information from the University of Maryland. She is certified in both information technology and program management.
